

BRIEFS

CREATIONIST BACK ON SCHEDULE AT SCHOOL

EDMOND, Okla. (BP) — Christian apologist Ken Ham has been re-invited to speak at Central Oklahoma University in Edmond by the school's president, after the student government caved to a campus LGBT group's pressure and rescinded the original invitation. "UCO officials have definitely heard from many concerned state legislators, several local residents, and alumni about the denial of our right to free speech," said Ham.

AMERICAN PASTOR MAKES CHINA PERSECUTION LIST

MIDLAND, Texas (BP) — The case of Wang Zhiyong, senior pastor of Grace Christian Church in Herndon, Va., who was interrogated and ejected from China during a discipleship seminar he was leading, has been added to ChinaAid's top 10 cases of Christian persecution during 2017 in the officially atheist, communist nation.

HEALTH CARE HELP COMING TO SINGLE-STAFF CHURCHES

DALLAS (BP) — Personal health plans offered by GuideStone may be options for churches with a single staff member, usually the pastor. For GuideStone to provide health insurance to a pastor or other single staff member, he/she must be a paid employee of an eligible church or ministry that is affiliated with or shares common religious bonds with the Southern Baptist Convention and works 20 or more hours per week, doubt.



TRADERS AT WORK — Baptists Marty Youngblood (left) and Sid Hopkins, both Georgia Baptists, are two Olympic veterans experienced at using the popular pin trading tradition at the Games to tell the Gospel story. (BP photo)

Olympics lead to Gospel

GANGNEUNG, South Korea (BP) — Visitors to the Coca-Cola Pin Trading Center at Olympic Park in Gangneung, South Korea, walk in and peer at the hundreds of small pins spread in front of traders standing behind the counter.

The colors and designs are enough to catch anyone's eye, encompassing pins from past Olympics in places like Sochi, Rio de Janeiro, and Atlanta. There are sport-specific pins

depicting soccer, figure skating, and gymnastics along with corporate pins bearing the logos of Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and NBC.

Two Baptists are in the middle of the popular Olympics pastime, seeking to nurture subsequent conversations about Jesus at the Winter Games currently underway at PyeongChang, South Korea.

"People from all around the world come through and we

trade pins, but we also build relationships," said Marty Youngblood, a missionary in church and ministry relations with the Georgia Baptist Mission Board. "As we see them later on in the park, we can go up and have other conversations because our primary role in coming over here as Christians is to share our faith in Jesus Christ."

Youngblood and Sid Hop-

see OLYMPICS on p. 5

Gaines gives last president's briefing

GALVESTON, Tx. (BP) — The next president of the International Mission Board (IMB) who will follow the departing David Platt needs to be someone who is in love with and in tune with Jesus and "has a love for the world," said Steve Gaines, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and senior pastor of Memphis-area Bellevue Church.

Gaines addressed editors of Baptist state publications during their Feb. 12-15 annual meeting in Galveston, Texas.

IMB President David Platt announced plans Feb. 12 to vacate his position to be the full-time teaching pastor at McLean Bible Church in Vienna, Va., just outside Wash-



GAINES

ington, D.C. Platt addressed editors in the morning session before Gaines spoke, noted that the IMB is "financially healthy, physi-

cally strong and practically ready." His decision to leave the IMB, he said, is "because I believe this is what God is leading me to do."

Platt said he is committed to leading the IMB until a successor is found. "The IMB leadership has expressed full support in me. They don't want there to be a pause in our work. The last thing the un-

reached people groups of our world need is a pause."

Gaines praised Platt for his passion, saying, "You can't have anyone more passionate than Dr. Platt."

The IMB has a history in recent years of strong leadership, Gaines said, with each president having "a different primary emphasis but shared the same love for lost people."

Gaines said he hopes "we get someone who prays and hears from the Lord" and can "bring as much harmony as possible to the position. He encouraged Southern Baptists to pray that God will lead the search committee to the person He has in

see GAINES on p. 5

Guidestone survey now available to church staff

DALLAS (BP) — GuideStone Financial Resources, LifeWay Research, and Baptist state conventions have teamed up again in 2018 for the biennial Southern Baptist Convention Church Compensation Survey.

Pastors and church employees are invited to participate in the survey, a resource used by churches of all sizes to determine fair wages and benefits. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete and is available at GuideStone.org/CompensationSurvey.

Survey respondents can enter to win an iPad. The winner will be notified via email.

The survey's results will be made available in the early fall, in time for many churches considering their 2019 budgets. The survey is the largest free church compensation study available in the United States.

The survey is a valuable tool for churches to benchmark their own salary and benefits against churches of

see GUIDESTONE on p. 5

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Taken for granted

It's human nature to grow accustomed to conveniences that have been around since before most of us were born. Virtually all of us grew up with a private-line telephone in our homes, but our great-grandparents just a few generations ago were amazed at the wires and handsets that transmitted their voices, however scratchy, over party-line connections to distant locations at the speed of electricity. In contrast, young people today understandably cannot picture a time without cell phones.

We tend to take for granted those things that seem to have been in wide use forever, if only because our frame of reference is so short. We forget that antibiotics, Disney World, air conditioning, NASCAR, fiber optics, and literally thousands of other items we use and enjoy every day were invented and commercialized only in the last 100 years — and some in much shorter time frames than that. It just seems to us that life has always been this easy and everything has always been taken care of for us.

So it is with the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' all-encompassing funding system that has made us one of the strongest Great Commission-centered organizations in the history of Christianity. The Cooperative program has worked so well for so long that we take it for granted. We shouldn't.

In the beginning and for many years after the birth of the Southern Baptist Convention, groups and entities approached individual churches and appealed for financial support for their particular ministries. This was the so-called "societal method." It proved to be tiresome to church congregations that found themselves listening to just about as many financial appeals as sermons. The societal method often resulted in undue competition among missions groups that were all chasing a limited number of dollars. It created winners and losers, and depended too much on exaggeration and emotional manipulation in order to acquire those precious few available dollars.

The 75 Million Campaign was introduced to Southern Baptists in 1919, conceived as a way to provide in one package the funding for all missions and ministries from the local church through the state Baptist conventions and ultimately to the Southern Baptist Convention. The 75 Million Campaign didn't achieve its lofty goal, but it provided the practical base that led to

the development of the Cooperative Program.

The Cooperative Program was introduced in 1925, proved early on to be a tremendous success, and soon established the benchmark for Southern Baptist giving that continues today. It represents nothing less than the remarkable joining together of millions of Southern Baptists, tens of thousands of local Southern Baptist churches and associations, scores of state Baptist conventions, and the Southern Baptist Convention — each an autonomous entity, it must be pointed out — to accomplish the Great Commission as enunciated by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:18-20.

There are many facets to how churches support missions, but here is a simple explanation of how the Cooperative Program works. An individual church member provides a monetary gift to his/her church (the tithe). The church body then decides how much of the collective gifts will be retained for that church's missions activities, and they send the remainder to their state Baptist Convention. Representatives known as "messengers" from those very churches who are now in "friendly cooperation" with the state convention meet together once per year and decide how much of the funds sent by those churches will be retained for state missions activities. Those messengers then send the remainder to the Southern Baptist Convention, where another set of messengers from local churches meet to decide how Southern Baptist missions activities will be funded.

Since the inception of the Cooperative Program, Mississippi Baptists have given a breathtaking \$830,000,000 to the Cooperative Program. The Mississippi Baptist total for the first year was \$209,404. The first year to top \$1,000,000 was 1952. It took 28 years to reach \$10,000,000, but only ten years more to reach \$20,000,000. Thirty million dollars was achieved in 2002, and the all-time record was set in 2008 with \$35,088,617 given to the Cooperation Program by Mississippi Baptists. (Source: cpmmissions.net)

Glory to God! May Mississippi Baptists continue to be found faithful in helping to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus through our sacrificial support for the Cooperative Program — and may we never, never take it for granted.

Don't Be Offended

I received a text from a dear brother who desired information on how to help a friend discuss the need for Black History Month in a multicultural and multi-ethnic nation. Both men have a sincere love for the Gospel and all people groups. One brother is an African American pastor of a predominantly black church and the other is Anglo American pastor of a predominantly white church.

The Anglo American pastor lamented to his friend that many of his members take offense when the nation highlights the achievements of one ethnic group to the neglect of others. They assume that Black History Month exists for the sole purpose of pleasing those of African descent as opposed to creating greater space for informed dialogue on the issue of race in America.

Black History Month invites all Americans to sit around the historical campfire and be warmed by the flames of African American achievements. For Christians, when these flames are properly understood in view of God's providence and grace, we listen to one another's story of pain and promise without contempt.

In the spirit of African American historian Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950), students of African American history of any hue learn to view the world through the lens of black oppression and black opportunity. They are given the hermeneutic tools to exchange the oft-repeated story of black inferiority for a new perspective that highlights black dignity and cultural development.

Stories of black achievement are often divorced from U.S. history books, continuing the myth that African peoples have only burdened rather than bolstered American greatness.

Woodson, author of the perennial best-seller, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, founded the Association of Negro Life and History to protect all Americans from historical amnesia. Woodson was a consummate scholar and educator who also created and served as editor of the *Journal of Negro History* and the *Negro History Bulletin*. These two resources are readily available at several university and seminary libraries.

In 1926, Woodson established an annual Negro History Week (now Black History Month), seven days in February devoted



Guest opinion
with Curtis Woods

to the celebration of black history and culture. He selected February to honor the birthdays of two cultural change agents, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. Douglass, whom many regard as one of the greatest Christian intellectuals in American history, finds his name virtually unknown amongst most evangelical Christians then and now. It disappoints me to even think about this fact.

If you are unaware of this early 19th-century drum major for justice, consider reading his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. I recommend an edition edited with an introduction by Yale historian David W. Blight.

Douglass' story might radically transform your understanding of chattel slavery in the antebellum North and South, creating informed dialogue as you enter conversations about race relations in American history.

I agree with Woodson's construal that "no one can be thoroughly educated [in America] until he learns as much about the Negro as he knows about other people."

Black history is American history. This month, and throughout the year, we have an opportunity to expand our thoughts concerning the African saga on American soil. Might our learning deepen our appreciation for one another and our commitment to take the Gospel to different image-bearers in America and beyond.

Woods is the Kentucky Baptist Convention's associate executive director for convention relations. This column first appeared at Kentucky Today (kentuckytoday.com), a news website of the state convention, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

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Florida school shooting claims Baptist lives

PARKLAND, Fla. (BP and local reports) — Florida Baptists are mourning along with all of Florida and the nation after an expelled student-turned-gunner opened fire Feb. 14 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, leaving 17 dead and 14 injured.

While law enforcement and state officials issued calls to prayer at press conferences, Florida Baptist churches in the area are mourning their own losses while offering words of hope and help to those hurting in their community.

The main campus of Church by the Glades is located less than 10 minutes from the school. Lead pastor David Hughes said many of the students in the church attend Douglas High.

Hughes held back sobs as he explained that a few families in his church had suffered a fatality and one family had a son who is "gravely injured." The church is still in the process of accounting for all their members connected to the school.

At times like this, Hughes said, people often wrestle with the reasons for the tragedy, but that's not the most important question to be answering. "What now?" is the better question, he observed, followed by, "Who wins?"

"Do we let fear and cruelty, violence and hatred win, or do we continue to fight against the darkness and continue to bring the message of hope and light that comes through Jesus Christ?" Hughes asked.

Together, not equal

Eddie Bevill is pastor of Parkridge Church in Coral Springs, just blocks from where the suspected 19-year-old gunman was taken into custody after he escaped by blending in with evacuating students. He said many Douglas High School employees and students are members of his church family and are still grappling with yesterday's tragedy.

Bevill said as far as he knew at



REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS — Scripture is read in English, Spanish, and French by leaders of a cross-denominational prayer vigil hosted by Parkridge Church after the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, FL, outside Miami that killed or wounded 31 students and teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. (BP photo)

press time, all the members of his church have been accounted for. Still, he said, "From within our church there is great sadness and a sense of loss."

Bevill recounted a conversation with a leader in his church who was friends with Aaron Feis, the assistant football coach and school security officer who lost his life shielding students from the bullets with his body and was the first victim to be publicly identified. The man told Bevill that when he and Feis were students themselves, they watched as the events at Columbine High School in Colorado unfolded on TV in 1999 with both of them weeping over the senselessness of it.

Parkridge Church met at Douglas High School for the first seven years of its existence. Bevill said the church has enjoyed a

good relationship with the school ever since and stands ready to help the school and community through the grieving process.

Part of that commitment was a Feb. 15 prayer vigil hosted by the church on its property organized by Church United, a cross-denominational evangelical group. Thousands of people, including Florida Gov. Rick Scott, turned out to pray for healing and protection and to seek solace and support with grieving neighbors.

Speakers read Scripture to the crowd in English, Spanish, and French, and pointed toward "the God of angel armies" as the ultimate source of strength.

"What we're trying to say to our county is that Christians care because Christ cares," Bevill said. "We want to be a present help in times of trouble."

Sal Cavarretta, pastor of the

Boca Raton campus of Family Church who attended the vigil, said it was a great showing of how the community of Parkland and neighboring communities are able to come together and support one another.

A brother and sister in his church who attend Douglas High School lost friends and a teacher in the attack. While on his way to meet with the students' family, Cavarretta said, "It is my privilege to be able to go and be a comfort to anyone going through this kind of thing and that, even through this, the Gospel would shine even brighter."

Being the church

Billy Young, Next Generation Ministries catalyst for the Florida Baptist Convention, said while all the answers aren't clear, Chris-

tians have the ability to point people to the One who does have the answers.

"Sometimes, working with students, the most important ministry you can have is the ministry of presence," he said. "There's no perfect way to minister here."

"We find ourselves here once again, sadly," said Al Fernandez, Florida Baptist Convention catalyst for Southeast Florida, "but this is an opportunity for the church to be the church. My prayer is that churches around the school can demonstrate the love of Jesus and the Gospel."

Parkridge's Bevill said it's also a time for prayer. "Once you're off the front page, it goes out of people's minds unless you live in that community, but we will need to continue to be lifted up in the weeks and months to come."

Baptist leaders call for prayer in wake of Florida school shooting

PARKLAND, Fla. (BP) — Amid the pressing anguish from the Feb. 14 school shooting that claimed 17 lives in Florida, Baptists nationwide can come alongside victims and families by interceding in prayer, key Baptist leaders said in sorrow-laden statements.

Tommy Green, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, stated, "We ask that our Southern Baptist family join us in specific prayer this Sunday for those impacted by this horrific event. Our prayer is for God to grant comfort, mercy, and peace to these

families.

"Our thoughts and prayers continue for the Parkland community. We are grateful for churches that are hosting prayer gatherings and loving their neighbors in this tragic time. We grieve with those who grieve in this hour."

Steve Gaines, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis, set forth a prayer list in comments provided to Baptist Press:

"We pray for every family member of every victim — par-

ents, siblings, and extended relatives. We pray for the fellow students and friends of those who died. We pray for every other student who was wounded physically and/or emotionally by this horrific event.

"We pray for the 19-year-old young man, Nikolas Cruz, who has been accused of perpetrating this horrendous crime. We pray for the law enforcement officers who have been and are working at the scene of the tragedy. We pray for everyone involved and for all the citizens across our nation as we set

aside any differences and unite our hearts collectively as we all mourn and pray for the loved ones of these victims.

"Ours is a sinful world where tragedies such as this occur. I urge all people to pray and seek the presence of the Holy Spirit that comes from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ alone can and will give the deepest comfort and peace to all who call upon Him."

Frank S. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee in Nashville, echoed the need for a prayer response, saying

in comments to Baptist Press, "We are certainly praying for the victims and their families. We're also praying for the churches and pastors in that area as they minister so selflessly to this hurting community. We pray for our Lord to be very near to them all."

The Florida Baptist Convention reported Feb. 15 that churches in the area of the high school are mourning their own losses while offering words of hope and help to those hurting in their community.

Having grown up in a pastor's home in Mississippi Baptist churches, I participated in Bible Drill from my earliest years. In fact, I began to memorize the books of the Bible before I could even read. What I learned continues to bless me. Mississippi may not be number one in a lot of categories, but one of the finest things in the world is that Mississippi is number one across the Southern Baptist Convention in Bible Drill participation.

In 2017, we had 2,798 children and youth participate in Bible Drill activities. In addition, there were over 350 volunteers at the state level of drills. That number doesn't include all the workers and helpers on the local church level who spent time and energy encouraging the boys and girls in their Bible Drills. These things don't just happen. It takes commitment. It takes time, effort, energy, faithfulness, and a Christ-like spirit to not only work with the Bible Drillers learning and locating verses and repeatedly trying to find those verses in the allotted time, but it also takes a great heart for the Lord in wanting to love and care for these precious young people.

While I am a life-long beneficiary of Bible Drill and memorization, I need to confess that I probably had bad thoughts about the people who were working with me. These wonderful folks did me a tremendous favor when they invested their lives and love and



In Praise and Appreciation of Bible Drill

help to enable me to know the Word of God, navigate its pages, and understand its contents. I confess I may not have had the best attitude in the world as I participated in the activities, but I am now so grateful for their faithfulness, perseverance, kindness, and love toward me.

God promises us in His Word that His Word will not return void. It will accomplish what He wants it to accomplish (Isa. 55:11). When it comes to the Word of God coming into my heart, my Bible Drill preparation time was an

investment that has produced rewards, blessings, and understanding far beyond anything I could explain.

Bible Drill preparation time is now. You can help the children in your church family and within your influence. Maybe you can't participate right now, but you can have a part in influencing and encouraging them that they too might have the opportunity to experience the everlasting and eternal impact of the Word of God.

Moms and dads, you can have a great part in your children's lives through

Bible Drill. Along with the other workers and helpers, the efforts of everyone are worth it. The results can be eternal. You are planting seeds. You are watching those seeds grow. In many lives, you will have the privilege of seeing God bring forth a harvest that will forever be committed to Him. I am one of many thousands of young people who, now at the other end of life, look back and realize all that you as parents and workers did to bless shape my life. I just want to say a huge thank you. Keep up the great work.

If you need help setting up a Bible Drill activity or supplies that will enable your children and youth to participate, please contact Tasha Presson by email at tpresson@mbcb.org, or by telephone at (601) 292-3284. Toll-free outside Jackson: (800) 748-1651. Do it today and let the Lord bless them for a lifetime.

Information about Bible Drills for Children is on the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board website at mbcb.org/church-growth/discipleship-family-ministry/bible-drill/. Information about Bible Drills for Students is also on the website at mbcb.org/church-growth/discipleship-family-ministry/student-ministry/student-bible-drill/.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

College News



William Carey University received the Seven Seals Award from the Mississippi Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. The award is presented in recognition of significant individual or organizational achievement, initiative, or support that promotes and supports the ESGR mission. (Right) Tim Lea, state training director of MSEGSR, presented the award. Accepting on behalf of the university are Vivian Clark, Assistant Registrar, Tradition Campus; Amanda Knesal, Director of Keelser Center; Tommy King, WCU President; and Laura Scovel, VA Certifying Official, Hattiesburg Campus.



The Mississippi Baptist Convention's Board of Ministerial Education recently awarded \$1,000 scholarships to 10 **William Carey University** students. The scholarships were awarded based on the students' demonstration of "faithfulness and godly character, as well as dedication to academic success." Students receiving scholarships from the Board of Ministerial Education are (front, from left) Joshua Britt, PJ Keen, Colton Fornes, Chandler Smith, (back row, from left) John Mark McCormick, Matt McNair, Sarah Houseley. Not pictured: Richard Shofstall, Jacob Stone and William Wilkie.

Blue Mountain College President Barbara C. McMillin announced that Dennis Swanberg, "America's Minister of Encouragement," will be the guest speaker at BMC's third annual scholarship gala. The event will be held in the Modena Lowrey Berry Auditorium, on the BMC campus, Friday, April 20. Blue Mountain College was ranked seventh by U.S. News and World Report in 2017-2018 as one of the Best Regional Colleges in the South. The College was ranked number one in the Best Value category of Regional Colleges in the South. Swanberg is pictured above right.



Mississippi College sponsored the Mississippi Science and Mathematics Tournament Feb. 8-9, attracting over 850 students from 85 schools. The 50-minute exams included topics such as biology, chemistry, computer science, math, and physics. MC professors began the competition in 1975, and is the oldest such academic competition for Mississippi high-schoolers. Students use scholarships of up to \$5000 annually to attend MC. The local 12-member Clinton High team came away with a 3rd-place overall trophy. Shown above were senior team members Johnathan Riley, Mary Madison Pevey, and Wesley Thomas.

What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

February 22, 2018

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

IT'S 2018!



Time to apply for scholarships with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation!

Our policy, deadline, and applications have changed. Please visit our website to review the 2018 policy and submit an application before April 30.

Call us at 601.292.3210 or visit www.ms baptist foundation.org for more info.

PASTOR/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

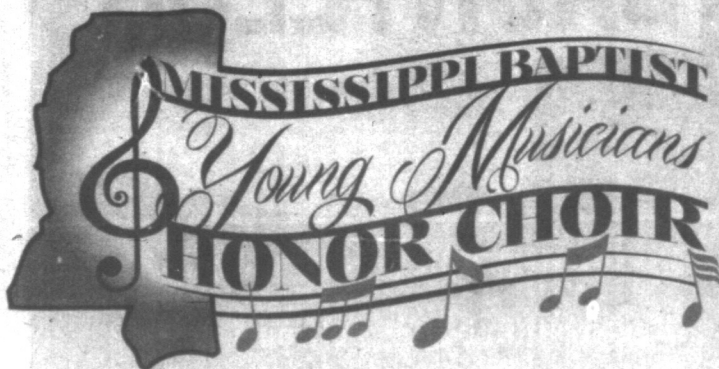
BIVOCATIONAL PASTORS – SAVE THE DATE

P/LD is excited to host Bivocational Pastors/Wives Dialogue Dinners in 2018! The purpose is to discuss new strategies for resourcing Bivo pastors throughout our state based on 2017 survey results.

Join us at one of the following locations:

- March 1 – Tupelo
- March 8 – Meridian
- April 5 – Hattiesburg
- April 12 – Flowood
- April 19 – Grenada
- April 26 – Gulfport

For additional information, contact the Pastor/Leadership Development Department at vclary@mbcb.org or 601-292-3305.



Young Musicians Honor Choir CONCERT

Saturday, April 21, 2018
6:30 p.m.

Brandon Baptist Church

Contact the Church Music Department at 601-292-3267 for more information.

CHURCH MUSIC DEPARTMENT

2018 MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST SPEAKERS' TOURNAMENT

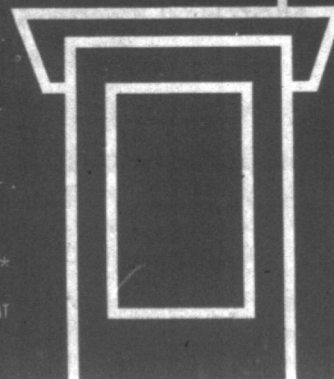
BRANDON BAPTIST CHURCH
BRANDON

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 2018

REGISTRATION: 10:00 A.M.

SPEECHES DUE TUESDAY, APRIL 3

CONTACT DISCIPLESHIP AND FAMILY MINISTRY AT
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FOR MORE INFORMATION



2018 CHURCH BUDGET LEADERS TRAINING

SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 2018
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, WIGGINS

For ALL Financial, Budget, Treasurers, Pastors, and Administrators in all churches in Mississippi. Contact the Stewardship Department at lleavell@mbcb.org or 601-292-3347 for more information.



WITNESSING THROUGH MEDIA AWARDS BANQUET & WORKSHOPS

March 2-3, 2018
Morrison Heights Baptist Church
Clinton, MS

DEADLINE EXTENDED TO FEBRUARY 23, 2018

Workshops include: Camera Operation, Sound Mixing, Lighting, Graphic Design, Live Productions, Live Streaming, Visual Techniques, Communication Concepts and Creative Productions.

Visit <http://www.mbc.org/business-services/communication-services/witnessing-through-media> or contact Communication Services at jchen@mbcb.org for more info.

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Visit www.mbc.org or contact the Pastors/Leadership Development Department at vol@mbcb.org for more info.

MBCB CONNECT CAMPS 2018

DAUNTLESS

Central Hills Baptist Retreat


Registration begins February 1, 2018
www.mbc.org/student-connect-camp

Session 1: June 4-7

Session 2: June 7-10

Session 3: June 12-15

Please contact Tony Martin at 601-292-3247 or tmartin@mbcb.org for further information.



2018 MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST PREACHING CONFERENCE

"THE BOOK OF JOSHUA"

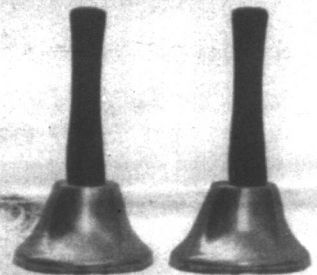
Register today at tinyurl.com/preach2018 and contact Pastor Leadership Development at velary@mbcb.org for more information.


Mississippi Baptist Handbell Festival

April 13-14, 2018

First Baptist Church, Raymond

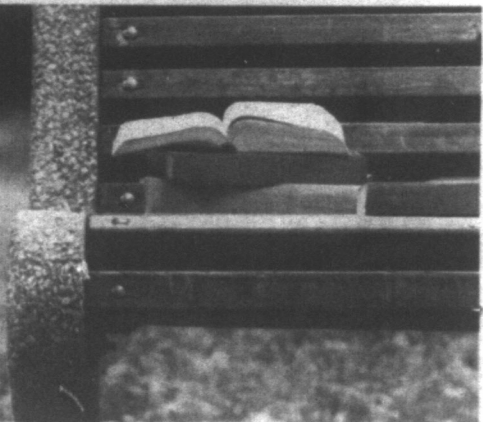
Contact the Church Music Department at cwtaylor@mbcb.org or 601.292.3267 for more information.



SUPER  SUMMER
Surrender

JULY 16-20, 2018 | MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE

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601-292-3283 FOR MORE INFORMATION.



2018 VBS Kickoff

March 23-24, 2018

Garaywa Camp & Conference Center

Friday, March 23

7:00 p.m. Worship Rally | 8:15 p.m. Breakout Sessions

Saturday, March 24

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Breakout Sessions & Expo

Visit www.mbc.org to register, or contact the Sunday School/Small Groups Department at elindigrin@mbcb.org for more info.

Pray this day for...

February 23 - March 8, 2018

"praying at all times in the Spirit... To that end keep alert with perseverance, making supplication for all the saints..."
Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)

Pray for: **Kaye Brooks**, missionary ministering to American Peoples through church planting.

Pray for: **Matthew Burke**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through general evangelism.

Pray for: **Rebekah Clark**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through youth evangelism.

Pray for: **Cindy Dellers**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Guy De Mars**, missionary ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through hospitality coordination.

Pray for: **Bethany Allen**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through community outreach/encounter.

Pray for: **David & Laurie Bledsoe**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through general evangelism & church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Clarence Frank & Phoebe Harrison**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples.

Pray for: **Kenneth & Kimberly Hathcock**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through student evangelism & church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Earl & Ramona Hewitt**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through medicine & church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Cynthia Hodgins**, missionary ministering to Deaf Peoples through church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Jeffery & Liese Holman**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through strategy coordination.

Pray for: **Shella Flowers**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through administration.

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HOUSE TOPS

OLYMPICS

cont. from p. 1

kings, a retired director of missions and pastor of Horizon Church in Suwanee, Ga., are pin ambassadors for Coca-Cola International. They'll spend a couple of hours a day interacting with visitors at the trading center.

One of the pins they offer for trade is a pin that Hopkins produced with colors that represent the Gospel story. "You picked a special pin," they'll tell someone who asks for that one. "That pin has a

story behind it. I can't tell it to you now, but I'll be happy to share it with you sometime later."

They don't share the story behind the pin at the trading center since they are there representing Coca-Cola, but the relationships they build allow them to approach people later in the Olympic park wearing the "story pin" and tell them what it means.

The black in the pin represents the sin that separates people from God. Red stands for the blood of Christ, green for eternal life, blue for heav-

en, and gold for the value of a relationship with Jesus Christ that is more valuable than a gold medal.

"The spirit at the Olympics is like no other," Hopkins said. "When we're not working here, we're out sharing with people and telling them about how to have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. There's an openness at the Olympics that you don't find anywhere else. People will have discussions that they would not have anywhere else, so it's a great opportunity."

This is Youngblood's 12th Olympics. Hopkins is likewise an Olympic veteran. Hopkins produced the pin they're using this year.

Youngblood said a lot of thought goes into its design. "Every Olympics kind of has its own personality, so we really pray and try to seek the Lord's wisdom on what kind of pin may best appeal to the culture that we're going into."

Youngblood said it's easy to get caught up in controversies that inevitably surround the Olympics, such as political wrangling and disputes

over scoring, but the pin trading experience and the experience of engaging people with the Gospel gives him hope.

"You get back here and you start seeing people being people, in their culture," Youngblood observed. "They're excited and proud for their country."

For Hopkins, the Olympic experience of meeting people from all over the world and sharing the Gospel with them is always a welcome boost.

"It rejuvenates me," he said. "It fires me up again to see what God does."

GAINES

cont. from p. 1

mind to lead the IMB.

Gaines addressed a variety of topics during his address and a question-and-answer session with the editors. Among them:

-- His presidency. Gaines will step down after two years as SBC president following the 2018 annual meeting in Dallas in June. "I never intended to be president," he said. The experience served as a reminder that "you don't tell God what you're going to do or not do."

The last two years have left him "more impressed with the SBC than ever before," he said, citing Kingdom work being accomplished at all levels of Southern Baptist life.

-- State conventions. Gaines said he has spent considerable time visiting state conventions during the past two years, speaking at annual meetings and evangelism

conferences. "State conventions are the backbone of the convention," he stated. "I love the men who lead these state conventions."

-- Evangelism. Gaines said he is praying that Southern Baptists will be more evangelistic, in light of baptisms having "nosedived" over the past two decades. "I don't know all the reasons," he acknowledged. He exhorted Southern Baptists "to work on personal soul winning. You pray for lost people by name that they will repent and call on the Lord to be saved."

He underscored the need to issue an invitation to accept Christ. "It's not a real Gospel conversation if it doesn't end with a Gospel invitation," he said.

-- Upcoming SBC presidential election. Gaines was asked if he was prepared for what could be a "contentious" presidential election in June. Currently two men have announced their intention to be nominated to serve as SBC

president: former nominee J.D. Greear, a pastor from North Carolina, and Ken Hemphill, an educator from North Greenville University in Tigerville, S.C., and a former SBC seminary president.

Gaines said he would handle the election as "fairly and neutral" as possible. "I pray it won't be contentious. I believe God will give us good leadership in the days to come."

-- His personal walk. Gaines was asked how he has changed and evolved over the years in his ministry. He cited an experience while serving as a pastor in Alabama when he developed an autoimmune disease that left him extremely weak. "I could not even comb my hair." Acknowledging that he was a bit "aggressive" in his early ministry, Gaines said God used the illness to make him more kind.

He added that a friend has told him that he even preaches differently than 20 years ago. "I am not as hard as I used to be," Gaines said, add-

ing that it depends on how a preacher sees the people to whom he is preaching. "I see people who are hurting, who need to be helped and people who are in prison who need to be set free."

-- Praying for the president. Asked about praying for the president, Gaines said he prays for U.S. President Don-

ald Trump and his family every day and did the same when President Barack Obama was in office.

He said he prays Psalm 21:1 for the president and all elected officials. If people would "do more praying and less criticizing," Gaines said, "we would have a better nation and better churches."

GUIDESTONE

cont. from p. 1

similar size within Southern Baptist life. Through GuideStone's compensation planning materials, GuideStone offers materials to help churches structure their compensation to make proper use of tax laws.

Respondents should have available the church's average weekly attendance, church membership, and 2018 annual budget, along with their annual salary, annual contributions to a retirement plan, and annual church-paid insurance premiums.

They should also have their annual housing allowance, Social Security offset, and rental value and utilities for church-provided housing.

Individual survey results can be contributed anonymously. Survey results are not reported individually. Once the survey closes May 31, LifeWay Research will work on compiling the results. Respondents will receive advance notice of the survey's availability.

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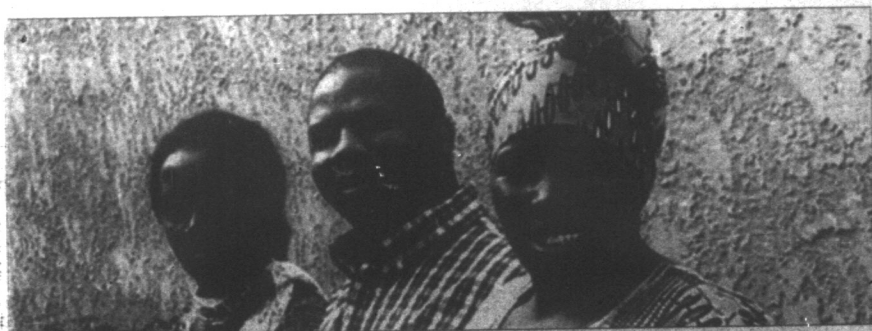
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ENCOURAGING WORDS — Pastor Frances Tugirimana (center) leads Solution Church in Arizona that imparts hope to war refugees like Esther Bamurange (left) and Esther Vumiliya, both from Congo, and other refugees fleeing African conflicts. (BP photo)

Arizona church lifts refugees

PHOENIX (BP) — For more than seven million Africans forced to flee their war-stricken lands, "home" has become a refugee camp where many wait year after year in hopes of a better life.

Esther Bamurange and Esther Vumiliya, both refugees from Congo, are two such women who survived the Great African War, one of numerous conflicts that have plagued the continent.

Braving nearly two decades in separate refugee camps, they now have settled in Arizona and safe from the conflict that has claimed an estimated two million lives and displaced two million others from their homes.

Bamurange (pronounced Bahm-a-rahng-gay) left her Congo homeland in 1998 and spent 19 years in a refugee camp in Rwanda. Esther Vumiliya fled the Congolese upheaval the same year and spent 16 years in a refugee camp in Uganda.

In the organized chaos of

these refugee camps, people are constantly moving in and out. Food supplies usually run low and stress is ever-present from such challenges as finding a tent-like covering from the rain, sharing a bathroom with the masses, sleeping on the floor, and showering once a week with water brought in by trucks.

Such camps are great "levelers," a step up from the ravages of war that blends together those from high social status with people of lifelong deprivation.

The community copes by organizing according to their gifts. Some are teachers. Others know how to cook. Doctors, few in number, treat people's ills as best they can.

Bamurange fled Congolese strife when she was just 16. One night, a terrible fight broke out and every relative on both sides of her family was killed, with Bamurange crediting God for His providence in protecting her that night.

A man who once befriended

her family hid Bamurange in a large basket, covered her with leaves, and took her to town. He guided his donkey cart up to trucks belonging to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the authorities took her in.

Esther Vumiliya has a similar story. The war took the life of her mother, father, sister, and many other relatives. In a grueling journey, she traveled on foot walking every day for three months until she finally reached Tanzania.

Where did she find water and food? She drank rainwater that had fallen in the streets, and she begged food from people along the way. After one year in Tanzania, she arrived at the refugee camp in Uganda where she stayed 16 years.

The two women languished in their refugee camps, working and waiting as time seemed to endlessly pass by, wondering what their future would hold.

see REFUGEES on p. 7

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

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BLJA EJHZZ: WNKEZZA

Clue: C = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark 1:11

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Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Always On Mission • Acts 28:17-28

"To preserve, explain, understand, and defend the truth of God entrusted to her, the church is called to appropriate it mentally, to assimilate it internally, and to profess it in the midst of the world as the truth of God." Herman Bavinck

This quarter, Paul, through the book of Acts has given us a great example of how we are to reach our world for Christ. This Bavinck quote clarifies exactly what Paul did. He knew the truth in his mind and in his heart. Because of that, he was able, without hesitation, to tell everyone he met about it. The book of Acts ends as Paul sits in his prison apartment sharing the gospel with everyone. II Timothy 4 gives us a more detailed look as we see Paul in his final days, cold and lonely but still ministering. We read these words, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever! Amen." II Timothy 4:18 (CSB) His rescue was not an earthly one but one that was eternal. He had lived his life well and was ready to see Jesus face to face.

If we merely scan Paul's life, we might reason since Paul was faithful, everyone with which he shared came to a saving knowledge of Christ. Nothing could be further from the truth. Acts 28: 24 says, "Some

were persuaded by what he said, but others did not believe." (CSB) That didn't stop him because the last line of the book of Acts says: "[he proclaimed the gospel] with all boldness and without hindrance."

I had lunch with a friend this week who shared her tears and discouragement about

someone she had been ministering who doesn't know Jesus and whose heart is hard and resistant to move even a bit toward this life-saving truth of Christ. As she spoke, I could sense that my friend's discouragement was causing her to second guess her call. Of course, we want everyone we invest in to come to Christ but God knew that we would have times like these and so He inspired Luke to write that "not all believed." Hear this! Not everyone

we talk to will be accepting of the gospel. When we become missional, we are to profess the truth boldly but we also must realize that if the message is not received, it is God they are rejecting, not us.



Explore the Bible

with Cyndi Grace

Luke stated that even though Paul's message was rejected, he continued to speak, believing that the next person might be opened and willing to receive the blessing of Jesus Christ. Our focus is always to be seeking. While we continue to pray diligently for that one lost adamant soul, we continue

to carry the message of the gospel to others. The enemy wants more than anything to stop us in our tracks by causing us to focus on supposed failures. When he can't destroy us, he will discourage us. We cannot fall for his tactics. Therefore, our last missional lesson is, "Not everyone will accept God's offer yet we must continue to share."

What about you? Are you discouraged in your efforts to share the gospel? Do you speak and it seems your words fall on deaf ears? May I challenge you to continue to speak even when there seems to be no results. God works in ways we cannot understand. Not all get to see the harvest. 1 Corin-

thians 3:6-7 (CSB) says: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." These are powerful words.

As we end our study of Acts, let's review the eight practical, missional lessons we have learned this quarter.

1. Always make sure the Holy Spirit is your guide (Acts 13)
 2. Be ready for great hardships but persevere (Acts 14)
 3. Always make the Bible, not our opinion, our reference in controversy (Acts 15)
 4. Prepare someone younger to continue the work (Acts 15)
 5. Make sure your actions correspond with your words (Acts 16)
 6. When ministering to someone who knows nothing, begin your story in Genesis (Acts 17)
 7. Be alert! False teachers abound and they sound good (Acts 20)
 8. Not everyone will accept the Gospel. It is not about you but Him. (Acts 28)
- Believer, let's be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

Grace is a Bible teacher and conference speaker and is a member of First Church, Clinton.

I Am A Light • Ephesians 5:8-14

Anyone that knows me very well knows I am not very efficient when it comes to being a handyman around the house. Actually, if I am completely honest, I am probably the least mechanically inclined person you will ever meet. My wife Anya is the one who has assembled the bikes or toys for our daughters, put the beds together, and has even fixed the garbage disposal on occasion. Am I embarrassed by sharing this? Does this make me less of a man? I don't think so. However, if you need to know the name of a song from the 1980's or a good recommendation for a restaurant in Jackson or Memphis, I am your man! The last time I checked, my tool box contained a door lock, an empty container for a wrench set, and some type of chain. The most important tool I own is a phone, so I can call for help.

A few months ago, one of the headlights on my vehicle quit working. So, it should come as no surprise upon making my purchase at a local auto parts store I asked the associate would he install it for me. The gentleman looked at my vehicle from the storefront window and replied (excuse his grammar), "I ain't touching it!" Another employee looked at me and either recognized my ignorance of all things involv-

ing vehicles or he was bored and stated, "I will be happy to help you, sir." Of course, I thanked him liked he had just told me he had discovered the cure for baldness. I admire people who can do the jobs that I cannot, and I am eager to observe their skills. As he was seemingly taking the front end of my SUV apart, we exchanged the usual chit chat about back-grounds, families, and the like. The topic of conversation came back around to the subject of children and he commented he and his wife had one daughter that was not with them anymore. He made the comment in such a way that I knew he meant the child had passed away. I did not press the issue. I did not have to.

His daughter was born with multiple birth defects and required around the clock health care. He did not speak to me in "churchy" language. In fact, he never knew I was a pastor. He spoke openly and honestly about the hurt and pain he and his wife

experienced in their darkest days. However, his conversation shifted a bit when he said, "But, our church and our community came around us and loved on us and we got through." When faced with adversity, wouldn't we all rather avoid it altogether? As I write these words the top news story is the school shooting in Parkland, Florida.

Everyone of us would elect to elude such heart-ache. But in this life, we do not escape without a measure of pain and suffering. Do

not forget: what we cannot go around, God will see us through. How is this possible? The fact there is light in the darkness.

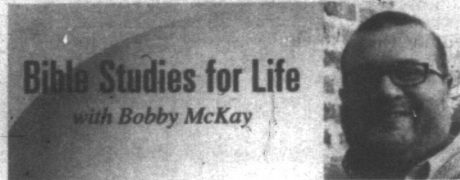
Paul reminds us this week of the power of light in a dark world. One of the most important words in this whole section of Scripture is in Ephesians 5:8. It is the word "were." Let us not forget as Christians we are new creatures, changed and are the children of God. Sure, we all have a past, but let's leave it there. We are "Light in the

Lord." Have you ever heard someone give a testimony and it seems like they enjoy and are fonder of their old sinful ways more than what God is doing for them presently? It shouldn't be that way. Light drives out the darkness. They don't relate to each other. It is like the folks who dip their french fries in their Frosty at Wendy's. It's just not natural. (That's a joke, by the way.)

We can sit in our comfortable churches and groan about how the sinful and dark the world is, or we can get out and invest in our communities, towns, cities, and schools, and flood it with light. That is what we are called to do. Those battered by the storm are looking for lighthouses. If the church you or I attend has earned a reputation for arguing or conflict, we are hindering the effectiveness of our lights. But there is good news. God is in the light changing business! Confess your sins. Repent. He will forgive you of your sins and your light will once again shine bright.

I noticed a few days ago one of the light bulbs in my bedroom is out. In an attempt impress my wife I am going to change it. Lefty loosey, righty tighty, right?

McKay is pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville.



Bible Studies for Life

with Bobby McKay

REFUGEES

cont. from p. 6

Both women are Christ followers who kept their faith that God would see them through, and finally things started to change.

The immigration process is tedious and exhausting, requiring dozens of interviews and standing in long lines for many hours. After nearly two

decades on the run, the women and their families finally made it to the U.S. in 2015.

Once their planes landed in Phoenix, their struggle still wasn't over in a new culture far different from anywhere they had ever lived. Not knowing anyone, they needed to connect to new friends, to a church, and to work opportunities.

Bamurange and her family were extremely lonely for the first two weeks before a new

acquaintance told her about Pastor Francis and Solution Church. Francis Tugirimana started the church in 2009 to serve the East African refugee community.

With help from the church, Bamurange's husband was able to get a job, enabling the family to buy a car.

Solution Church, having become a key influence in helping the women and their families adjust to life in the States, has

provided friendship, prayer, support, and help with schools and teachers. English classes help people eventually find work, and guidance is even given in learning to drive a car.

Solution Church, a congregation of more than 250 people, cares for needs big and small in refugees' lives. The church baptized 90 people in the last year.

Still, the needs are overwhelming with so many still

entering the community, as the refugee crisis in many parts of Africa remains a widespread, open-ended and painful struggle.

Though their arduous journey nearly cost them their lives, Esther Bamurange and Esther Vumiliya showed rugged courage, faith, and perseverance. Their stories and their strength have touched their community with a testimony of God's grace even in the worst of times.

Just for the Record



The nursery department of **Trinity Church, Monroe County**, enjoyed a Valentine party during the morning worship service. Shown above are the children and one of their helpers, Justin Simmons, pastor.



Lollars Grove Church, Eupora, ordained Bill Bright as deacon Feb. 11. Shown at left are pastor William Weddle, Bright, and his wife Carol.

In other Church

News:

➤ **Trinity Church, Laurel**, will host Brian Free & Assurance in concert Feb. 24, 6 p.m. Love offering.



Pastor Marty Wilson, **First Church, Morton**, baptized youths Chloe McDill, Rachael Revette, and Abby Porter.



Vernon Aubrey Gipson was honored Jan. 21 as deacon emeritus at **Central Church, McNeill**, having served over 50 years as an ordained deacon at Central Church and former churches. He is shown above with his wife Peggy.

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